



ESPAI ORÍGENS VISITOR CENTRE – LA ROCA DELS BOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

CAMARASA, CATALONIA, SPAIN

Neanderthal 2.0

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Neanderthals occupied Roca dels Bous at the end of the Middle Palaeolithic close to when they became extinct. The University Autònoma of Barcelona's CEPAP, a research centre focused on the study of prehistoric heritage, has regularly excavated this settlement site since 2000. The site is located in the foot hills of the Pyrenees, the Lleida Pre-Pyrenees.

One of the first priorities right from the start of this research project was to develop effective strategies to transfer knowledge to the general public. Thanks to a European project called ORIGINS, the site has been open to the public since 2010. A new and advanced outcome from this project was to use ICT as an educational tool for the general public to interact with the archaeology of the site. A further remit was to design a series of itineraries which visitors could follow and be guided through the prehistoric culture using digital tablet screens, loaded with audio-visual content that explained the geology of the site. This included information to understand Neanderthal cultures and the methods used by archaeologists to record and interpret the archaeological data.

The remote past, and the Palaeolithic and Neanderthal periods are very remote, it is not easy to present to the public. The site has few preserved artefacts and no human fossils making it difficult for the public to understand the site.





Visitors with interactive tablets at La Roca dels Bous © Espai Orígens

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While the site is of great interest to scientists, especially given its connection to Neanderthal occupation at the end of the Middle Palaeolithic in the Lleida Pre-Pyrenees, it is not easy to convey this to the general public, particularly given the scarce number of prehistoric stone tools, and fragments of bones found in the middle of a collection of chaotic rocks at the Roca dels Bous.

We have found that the implementation of ICT technologies as a tool for communicating cultural heritage has allowed us to rethink the more traditional interpretation tools. The powerful impact of digital images and ability to acquire huge quantities of contextual information make it practical for the visitors to get a personal approach to the site, building on the information and explanation available on site from staff and static displays in the visitor centre.

Visitors now have two options, the self-guided ICT tour or a guided visit. The visit has four stops, each one with a different theme about the daily life of Neanderthals. Once the visitors reach the archaeological site at Roca dels Bous they have gained sufficient knowledge to fully understand the place. ■

ABOUT ESPAI ORIGENS VISITOR CENTRE AND LA ROCA DELS BOUS, CATALONIA, SPAIN

Espai Orígens is a visitor centre focused on displaying the Prehistory research of the pre-Pyrenees area, mainly centred on the study of the prehistoric caves of La Roca dels Bous and Cova Gran. The nearby Archaeological Park of Sant Llorenç de Montgai is part of the visitor experience.

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